

BERRY SCHOOLS HISTORIC DISTRICT (Landscape)
Mount Berry
Floyd County
Georgia

HABS NO. GA-2170

HABS
GA
58-MOBE,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Department of the Interior
Southeast Region
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

The Berry Schools Historic District

Location: Mount Berry, Floyd County, Georgia

UTM Coordinates:

	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
A.	16	668000	3796570
B.	16	667840	3793940
C.	16	665760	3794340
D.	16	661018	3797700
E.	16	660980	3800740
F.	16	663180	3800880

Quad: Rome North, Georgia

Dates of Construction: Late 1800's through present.

Present Owner: The Board of Trustees of Berry College
Mount Berry, Georgia

Present Uses: Agriculture, Educational, Museum,
Religious

Description: The Berry Schools Historic District, a
National Register Property, contains
5,300 acres and is comprised of the
Berry College Campus, the Berry Academy
Campus, a scenic corridor connecting
them, Possum Trot Church, the House O'
Oreams, Oak Hill, the waterwheel and

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mill and the Richard W. Wood House. The eastern section of the district is bisected by U.S. 27. To the east of U.S. 27 are located Oak Hill, Martha Berry's family home, the original log cabin, the museum and the Richard W. Wood House.

The Berry College Campus and its various sections are located to the west of U.S. 27. Sections include the original boys campus, the men's residence campus, the classroom complex, the log cabin complex and the Ford buildings.

The Berry Academy campus is located to the northwest of the college. The House O' Dreams, the mill and millwheel and Possum Trot Church are located to the west of the academy.

Significance:

The Berry Schools Historic District is significant as an educational innovation. Built under the personal direction of Martha Berry to provide an educational opportunity for the mountain children of north Georgia, the schools' programs include Berry's convictions of strong religious faith and the educational value of "honest labor".

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Unique Qualities:

Berry is unique in that it provides a combination of environmental charm, intellectual attainment, opportunities for work experience and religion. Berry offers the distinction of learning and living on a campus nestled among 28,000 acres of forests, fields, mountains, lakes and streams. The campus, with its beautiful buildings and attractive landscaping, creates an environment of natural charm. Berry's aesthetic atmosphere is enhanced due to the fact that most of the countryside bordering the campuses is owned by Berry Schools and can be utilized in maintaining a distinctive environment for education.

Compiler of Information:

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The following was taken directly from the Berry Schools National Register Nomination Form prepared by the Historic Preservation Section of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

"....Martha Berry was born October 7, 1866 the daughter of Captain Thomas Berry and Frances Rhea Berry. Thomas Berry, from Virginia, had been one of the earliest settlers of Rome, Georgia, arriving in the early 1840s, and became one of its wealthiest residents. He bought Oak Hill, a two-story frame structure built in 1847, shortly before he left to join the Confederate Army in 1861.

It seems Berry was brought up with a sense of responsibility toward the mountain people in the area. As a child she accompanied her father to take food and supplies to them and she apparently continued the practice as an adult.

She was educated at home by a governess, after which she attended a finishing school in Baltimore. Her ambition had been to write, but her life changed its course about 1900 when she began teaching Sunday School to the mountain children, first in a log cabin on the grounds of Oak Hill and then in a church in Possum Trot community.

Since the children and their parents were illiterate, she began teaching them to read from scriptures she painted on the wall. From there she established day schools, one at Possum Trot, two in other nearby communities, and a fourth one on her own property, 86 acres

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inherited from her father. In 1902, she built a dormitory and created the Boy's Industrial School. She deeded her property to the school in a permanent trust. In 1904, she had two additional buildings built for a girls' school, and the complex was called the Berry Schools. During the early '20s, she established a separate Mountain School on the grounds of the present academy to spare older students just learning to read and write the embarrassment of attending school with more advanced students their age and younger.

The purpose of the schools was to provide an education for the mountain children, and Berry traveled through the surrounding hills in search of potential students. Entrance requirements were that the student be of good character, too poor to go to school elsewhere and have made the utmost of previous chances at schooling.

In 1926, she added a two-year college program, extended in 1930 to four years. The college is on the site of the original boys' and girls' schools. Those schools were moved to the Mountain School campus.

From the beginning, when the Possum Trot community church, a pre-Civil War structure in severe disrepair, was repaired by potential students and their parents, work has been an integral part of the program of all the Berry schools. Most of the buildings were built by the students themselves during Berry's lifetime, either from logs on the property or, later, from bricks made by the students.

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Eighty percent of Berry School students paid no cash at all, though even those who paid were required to work, for Berry felt that work fulfilled a "vital educational function". Students worked rotating shifts of two days at work and four in school. They built roads, cooked and served meals, managed a forestry operation, and operated a dairy, an orchard, shops, a farm, poultry yards, a nursery, weaving and sewing rooms, a bakery, and furniture and print shops. They also rebuilt the wooden waterwheel, one of the largest overshot wheels in the country.

In addition to providing most of the food for the schools, agricultural achievements included a jersey dairy herd which received a top rating from the American Jersey Cattle Association. Poultry production and livestock raising also set records for the school. The forestry program used the latest land management techniques, and Berry was made Vice-president of the American Forestry Association in recognition of the schools' conservation program.

Because of the lack of tuition revenue, the schools always were in need of money, and Berry was remarkably proficient at raising funds. Her first major contributor was Andrew Carnagie, who gave \$50,000 on condition it be matched from other sources. The publisher of the New York Times led an endowment drive for the Berry schools, and the Henry Fords contributed money for the Ford Complex of buildings as well as the kiln where bricks for campus buildings were made. Theodore Roosevelt, who called the schools "the greatest work in the conservation of human resources in America," introduced her to influential people and also came to dinner in 1910 in the log cabin which now bears his name. Berry

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received the sympathy and support of, among others, Calvin Coolidge, Woodrow Wilson, Eleanor Roosevelt and William Jennings Bryan.

Among the honors she received were honorary degrees from eight American universities, a medal from the Roosevelt Memorial Association presented by President Calvin Coolidge, appointment as first woman member of the Board of Regents of the Georgia University System and presentation at the Court of St. James when King George and Queen Mary honored American educators. She also was voted one of America's Twelve Greatest Women in a Good Housekeeping Magazine nationwide contest and honored on her birthday in 1939 with a national hook-up as "Woman of the Week." She died in 1942.

Martha Berry established her schools during a period of great idealism regarding education. Consequently, she, along with contemporaries such as John Dewey and Marie Montessori, captured the public's imagination at a time when it was thought that education could accomplish virtually anything. Practically, her work improved the lives of 15,000 students who graduated during her lifetime, and thousands of others who benefited from her legacy...."

References:

Georgia Department of
Natural Resources
1976

The Berry Schools National
Register Nomination Form

Georgia Department of
Transportation
1983

Preliminary Case Report for
Project M-3803(2), Floyd County

NOTE: The Berry Schools Historic District National Register boundary as depicted here was drawn in 1967. An error was made in the location of Possum Trot Church and as to date, the Church is not included in the above boundary. The Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Section is currently in the process of having the boundary amended to include the actual location of Possum Trot Church.

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